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Vision Retrospect:

The methodical unraveling of Alphabetica Archaeologica

Vision Retrospect is the exegesis which accompanies the
thesis Alphebetica Archaeologica

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AUT Faculty of Humanities MCW

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A exegesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology
in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Creative Writing

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT

Alphabetica Archaeologica is a work of Conceptual Literature that moves through the process of uncovering and re-discovering the nature of the Alphabetic family. The Surveying, excavation and analysis of this ever changing and constantly reflexive series of symbols produce a logical and sometimes illogical narrative of the movement, both material and non-material, of a very exuberant and alive alphabet. The re-construction of meaning and voice is created around the imagined look, feel, sound, movement and taste of each letter.

Similar to a traditional palimpsest, Alphabetica, is the product of many past alphabet imaginings, woven in and out of each other. Allowing the magic and mystery of this historic family to creep through time, transcending and descending through the layers of narrative. If you look closely you will find wondrous thoughts and imaginations that have all been derived from historical facts, spirituality, philosophy and my own personal imaginings.

Alphabetica balances form and content to produce a cohesive piece of Conceptual Literature that tells the story of the alphabetical world in a three dimensional way; using textured and smooth paper, colour images, sketched illustrations, inconsistent bleeding ink, soft grey breathing spaces, twenty six eerie alphabet designs and a hard cover perfect bound book. All of these elements work together to create a overall story feel and narrative that represent all of the human senses associated with each individual alphabet character.

As a dance in word-form, this book does not conclude with a stop but shows how the story continues. Vehemently assuring the readers that the alphabet is ALIVE and the movement continues through space and time long after the back cover has closed.

INTRODUCTION

Alphabetica Archaeologica is an alphabet primer book.
It is a book that celebrates the movement and history of the alphabet.
It is book that celebrates the art of language and poetry.
It is a book that celebrates confusion, anger, awkward interactions, frustration, psycho-somatic stress and sexual fantasies.

Due to the fact I have never studied literature, never engaged in academic writing and most certainly never penned a piece of literary criticism, I purposely chose not to create a theoretical exegesis. Instead I designed an exegesis that acts as platform for investigating the process involved in the experimentation and making of Alphabetica Archaeologica, the creation of language as art and the revival of self-controlled printing and production. I am but a mere human being intrigued by the movement of the alphabet and the beauty of language when it engages with the senses.

Using a cohesive mixture of Visual Writing, Language Poetry, illustrations, typography and specific printing and production process's, Alphabetica takes its reader on a mystical train ride through the potholed history of the Alphabet. Examining and unearthing flowing narratives, mischievous designs, and sibling rivalry, this work weaves through out time and history evaluating and analyzing the historical aspects of each letter as they have morphed through the centuries: Their original symbolic meanings, their ritual importance, religious meanings, cultural relevance, philosophical and cosmological importance and their current cultural standing.

Introducing complexity in language and interaction between individual letters, the work becomes reflexive in a manner that recognises the constructed nature of things, which cannot be words but graphemes and morphemes constantly in a state of change. Made up of both Visual Writing and Language Poetry, Alphabetica breaks down the essence of language to reveal its hidden beauty, its sounds, its shapes, its groupings and its visual elements.

Charles Bernstein describes language poetry as a *"dislocated form of poetry that stretches language to reveal its potential for ambiguity, fragmentation, and self-assentation within chaos" (as cited in Senning, 1999).* Alphabetica forms it's own language conventions: spelling words as they sound, using space and rhythm to awaken narrative and breaking down words to explore what letters they are made of and how those letters might coincide with the story narrative.

 The aim of Alphabetica is to create a cohesive conceptual product that took something usual (the alphabet) and made it unusual. Incorporating visual codes and design elements in an attempt to break traditional forms of literature, Alphabetica can be seen as an aid, similar to a paint by numbers picture, that entices and subtly carries its readers to a point of conclusion, whilst demanding to be handled and interacted with. This type of Visual Writing has been well defined by London book publisher Visual Editions, *"The way we think about visual writing is this: writing that uses visual elements as an integral part of the writing itself. Visual elements can come in all shapes and guises: they could be crossed out words, or photographs, or die-cuts, or blank pages, or better yet something we haven't seen. The main thing is that the visuals aren't gimmicky, decorative or extraneous; they are key to the story they are telling. And without them, that story would be something altogether different " (2011).*

Inspired by writers Kafka, Cage and Foucault, intrigued by the colours of Rothko, drawn to the blank canvases of Rauschenburg, pushed forward by the fear of Bad Jelly the Witch and totally overwhelmed by the repetitive circles and phalluses of Yayoi Kusama. These artists resonate initially in my own work in the themes I have used, the writing techniques and the over all concept. Themes like psycho-sexuality, infinity, compulsive repetition and obsessive self-image as well as the technical language techniques in the form of inter-textuality, lyrical structure, polysemy, language play, letter combination, mixed diction, features of enjambment and theories of epistemology and cosmology. Block colour like Rothko becomes used as inspiration for letter colour and the blank canvases of Rauschenberg were a source of reference in using space to create a feeling of a void.

Drawn to the works of these twentieth century modernists who represented a dark and omnipresent emptiness, Alphabetica, lingers in these feelings of sadness and loneliness. Art Historian Robert Hughes suggests that the end of the twentieth century modernism is represented by a "void", seen in the works of Cage's Silence, Rothko and Rauschenburg and the destruction of the Pruitt-Igoe urban housing project. Something about the concept of the Void represented by these artists really floated my boat; I became obsessed with ideas of how the void might feel and taste, and began to imagine the alphabet had been thrown out from the void- almost as if the void wouldn't have such an unbalanced family poisoning its stomach. The artists above were an inspirational starting point for developing Alphabetica, which in its initial stages began as concrete poetry, where the composition of the words on the page are an essential part of the story aid.

The story layout, the abstract narrative and the overall concept may occasionally be confusing, and predominantly unusual, but I have taken the stance of Charles Bernstein, who said, *"Oddly, it is a form of dissent these days to hold out that art that doesn't get the market share can actually be as valuable as the art that does, that ideas that are hard to understand may have something to say that ideas you can understand can't begin to get at. I'm for the ketchup that loses the race" (as cited in Senning, 1999).* Alphabetica is a challenge to the perspective of the mainstream reader, an odd and perhaps inaccessible book – but even the humble chip must sometimes give way to ornate artistry of the delicately crafted tempura – a fusion of flavours, colours and most importantly shapes. I give you the reader Alphabetica – my crafted and delicately hand-made work of conceptual literature.

METHEDOLOGY: *from concrete poetry to concept literature*

Stage one: experimentation

From the moment I signed up for the MCW I knew I wanted to create a type of book I had not encountered before. A book that mixes the stylistic features of a children's book, a bookzine, a design book, a book of short stories, a porn book and typography book. I wanted to create something that I would froth over if I found in a bookstore, something that incorporated all I am obsessed with and something that demanded to be handled and interacted with. A book for those who hate kindle and love spending money on hand made items.

I began my project by collating everything I am obsessed with and inspired by:

Helmut Newton- photographer

Oscar Wilde- writer

Gestalten books – design and typography

Yayoi Kusama- artist

Mark Saporta- conceptual writer

Bernard Wilhelm- fashion designer

Bad Jelly the Witch

Dachshunds

Acne Paper- design magazine

Kafka- absurdist writer

Gabriell Garcia Marques- writer

Vivienne Westwood- fashion designer

Stamps- letterpress type blocks

I figured out the main themes I was attracted to within each of the creatives work: Psychosexual tendencies, infinity, the void, space, fragmentation, magic, surrealism, infatuation, obsessive repetition, self-image and chaos. My first question was -how do I collaborate the stylistic features I wanted with my chosen themes to create a conceptual form that balances form and content?

Having no experience with book design and type layout, I was unsure how to begin such an experimental project. I began at the basics of printing; letterpress stamping. I literally stamped the shit out of everything. I stamped out the works to Kafka and stamped out my themes I was going to use. Stamping gave me the freedom to create a basic form of concrete poetry, making posters with falling type and curved type without having to struggle in Photoshop or InDesign (Fig. 1, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 & 1.4). I used my typewriter instead of my computer and practiced moving words on a basic machine.

During my stamping frenzy I was figuring out how philosophical ideas like infinity and the void can be transferred into something tangible and tactile: working out how infinity smells, how it looks, how I can play it on the harmonica and how I can stamp it on the page. If psychosexual tendencies were a person, what personality would they have, what beat would they walk to, would they smoke, would they always be touching their penis and would they be into existentialism. I would then play around with how the story would fit on the page, would "psychosexual" the person have messy type, or would the story of psychosexual fall off the page, perhaps the paper the story was on would need to be dense and heavy like the mind of psychosexual (Fig 1.5, 1.6 & 1.7). I was giving each theme a personality, a character, a rhythm and an opinion, and then incorporating those characteristics through to the layout and the design of each story.

Through repetitive stamping I was becoming interested in stamping individual letters. Collaborating different ways of producing each letter such as stamping a black A, turning the A around and upside down, stamping a small A in red, stamping a green A on pink paper and stamping an extra large A on heavy textured paper was the first step at looking at the alphabet as a series of visual art rather than a mere means to an end within communication. The magic of the alphabet was beginning to pour into my workspace. I began marrying my themes to individual letters, stamping the letter A to the shape of the void and stamping letter C into a story of confusion. By giving the posters both a written and visual narrative, I was unknowingly developing the concept of Alphabetica.

In the middle of my stamping phase I came across the mysterious works of Guy De Cointet and was immediately obsessed with his abstract messages. I threw out the stamps and began devising codes and intricate line codes for each theme (Fig 1.8, 1.9 & 1.10). The magic of codes is the concept the type you are looking at has a completely hidden message. Perhaps what the lines of code I was viewing was a message saying "hi reader, you are a big fat mother fucking Butfag". Something about the mystery really intrigued me, and had later resonation in my work, and can be seen in the coding for letter S (Fig 1.11 & 1.2).

During this initial stage I also investigated book packaging and bought all the alternative books I could find. Looking for ways to change narrative using cover design, space and type; cutting circles in pages, writing on pink paper, printing with red ink and changing paper stocks (Fig. 1.13 & 1.14). My work was beginning to move away from concrete poetry and was beginning to reflect the type of books produced by London based publishers Visual Editions who produce books using Visual Writing to marry form and content. Modeling my work of Mark Saporta's Composition No.1, Alberto's hybrid novel and French graphic designer Blex Bolx's two books Seasons and People, I was figuring out how to intertwine my stamped letter stories into cohesively, packaged concepts (Fig. 1.15, 1.16, 1.17, 1.18 & 1.19).
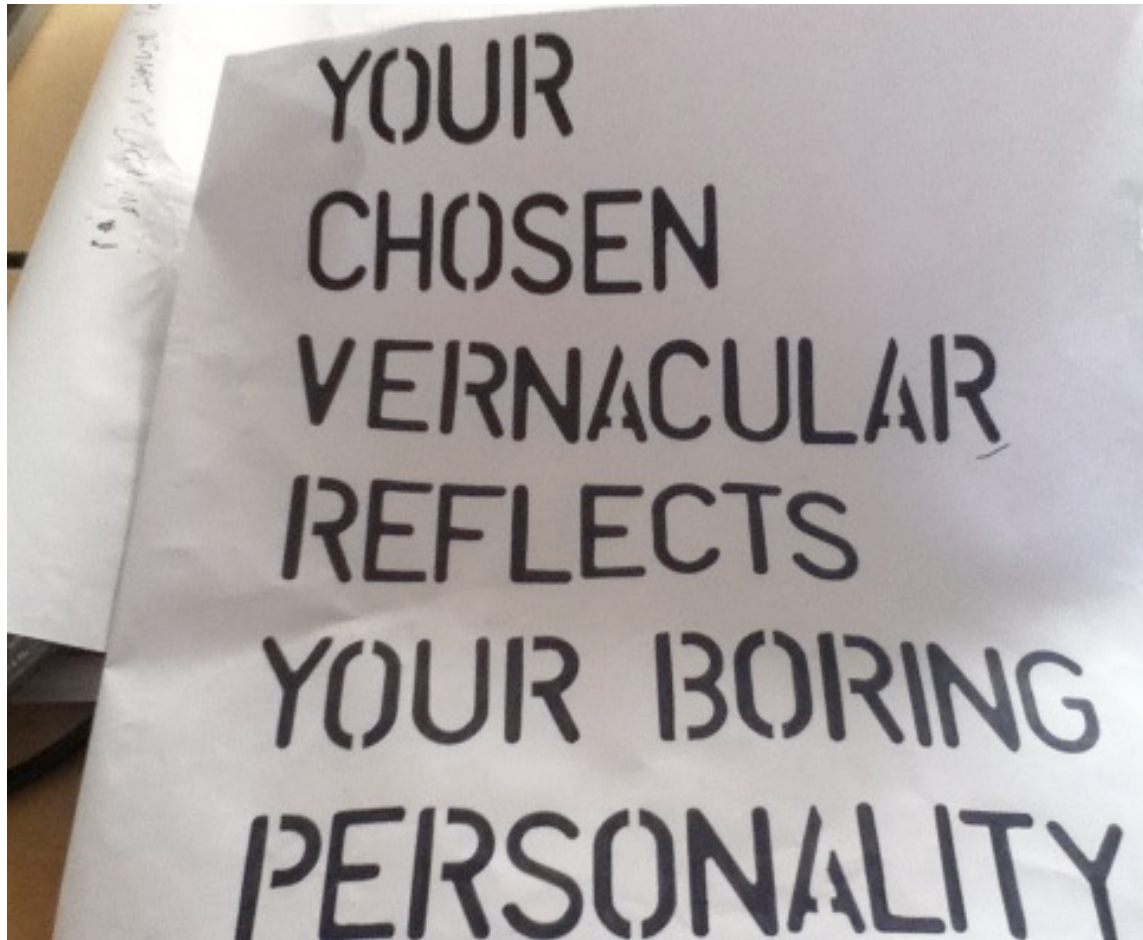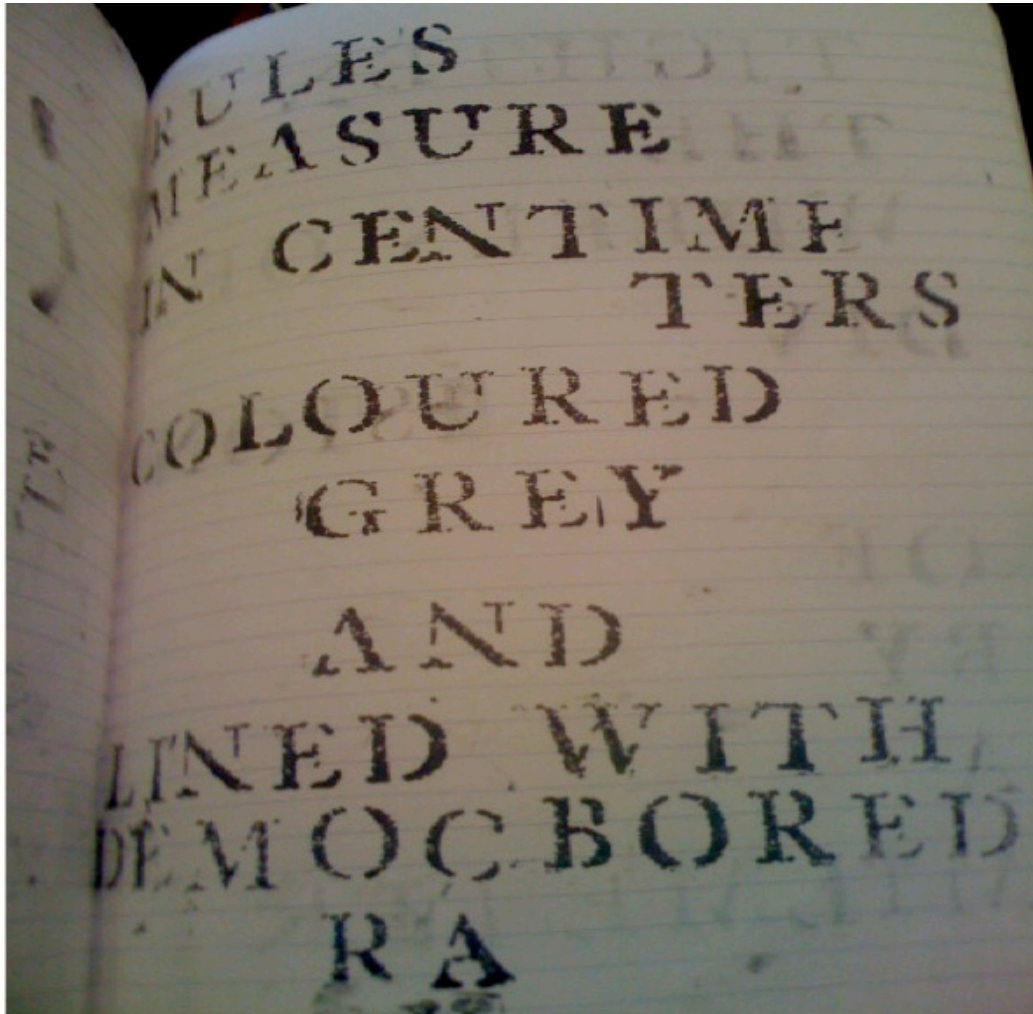
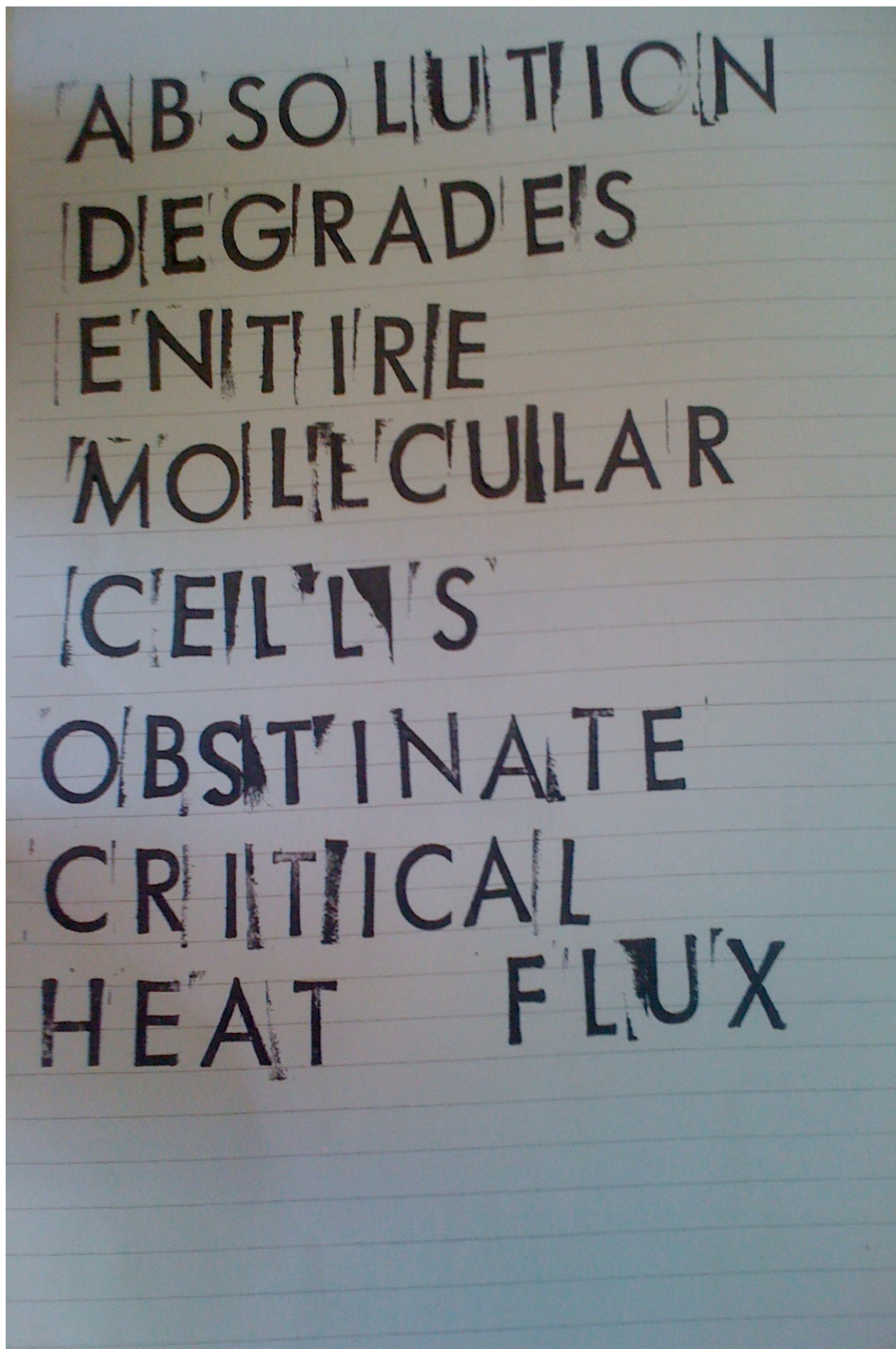Fig. 1
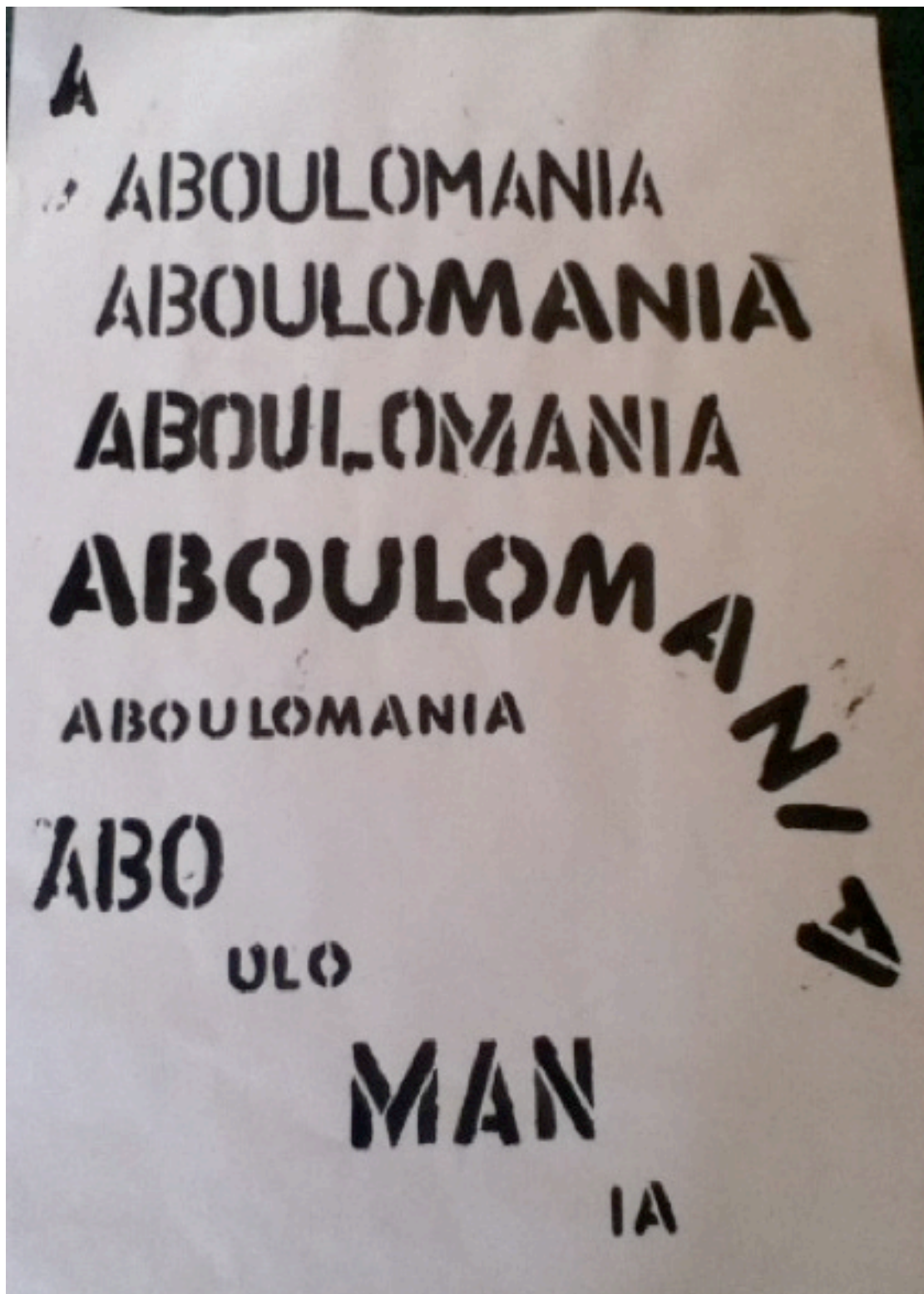
Fig.1.1

Fig.1.2

Fig.1.3

Fig.1.4

Fig.1.5

Fig.1.6

Fig.1.7

Fig.1.8

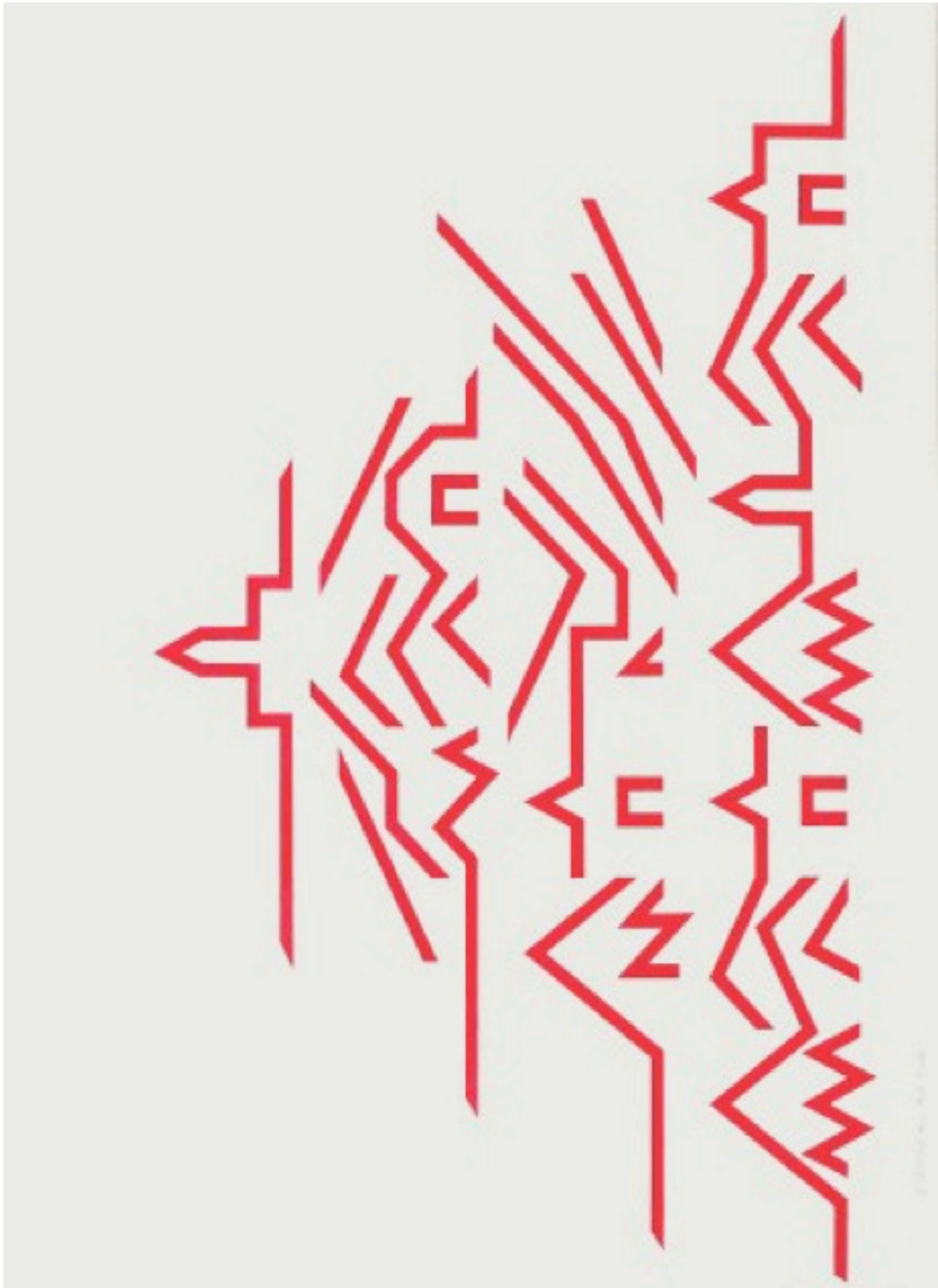## Fig.1.9

Fig.1.10
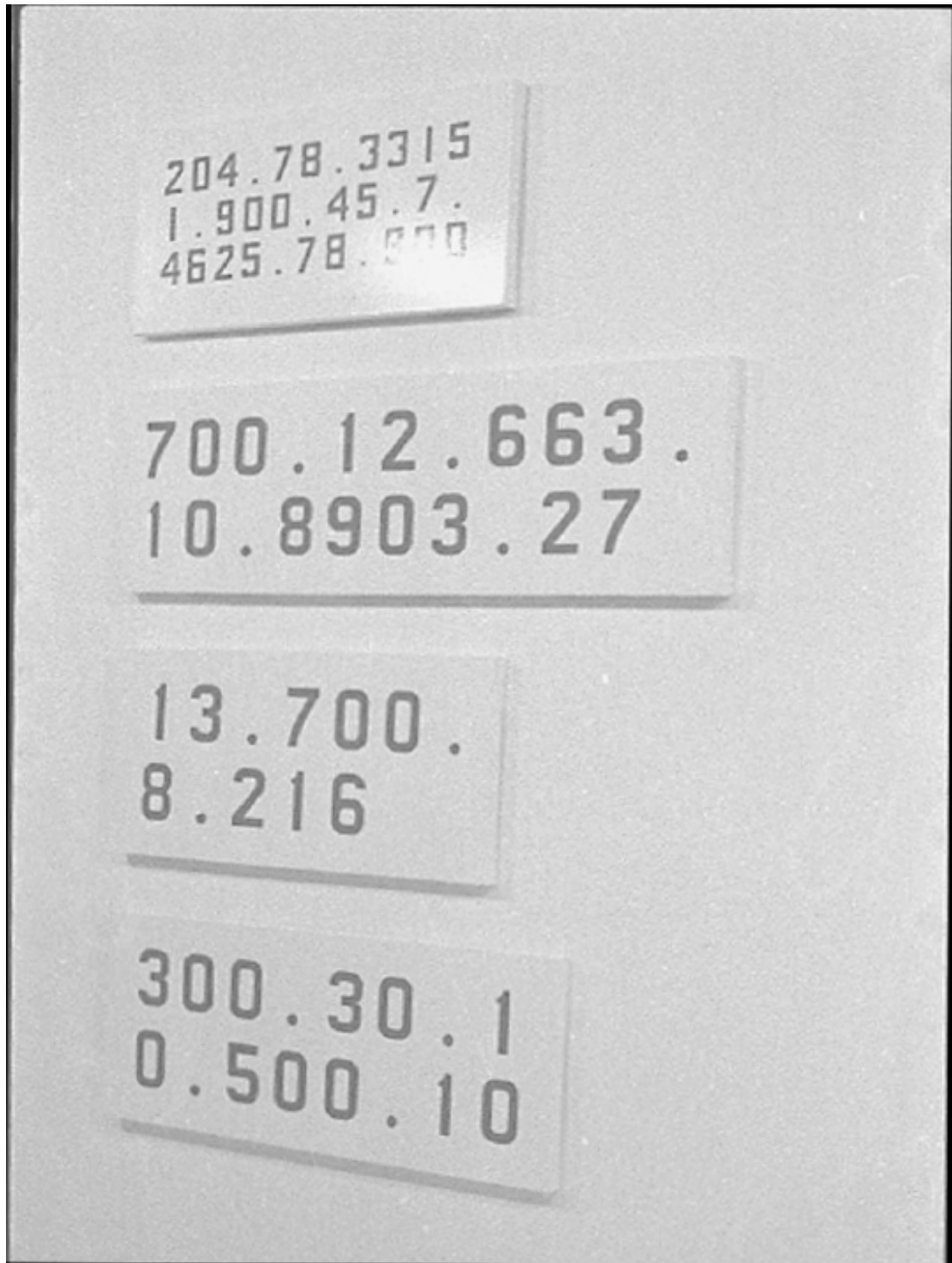
Fig.1.11

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--- -. .. -.-. .- / .-.-.-

.. / .... .- ...- . /

.-.. --- ... - /

-- -.--

/ -- .. -. -.. . .-. .-.-.-
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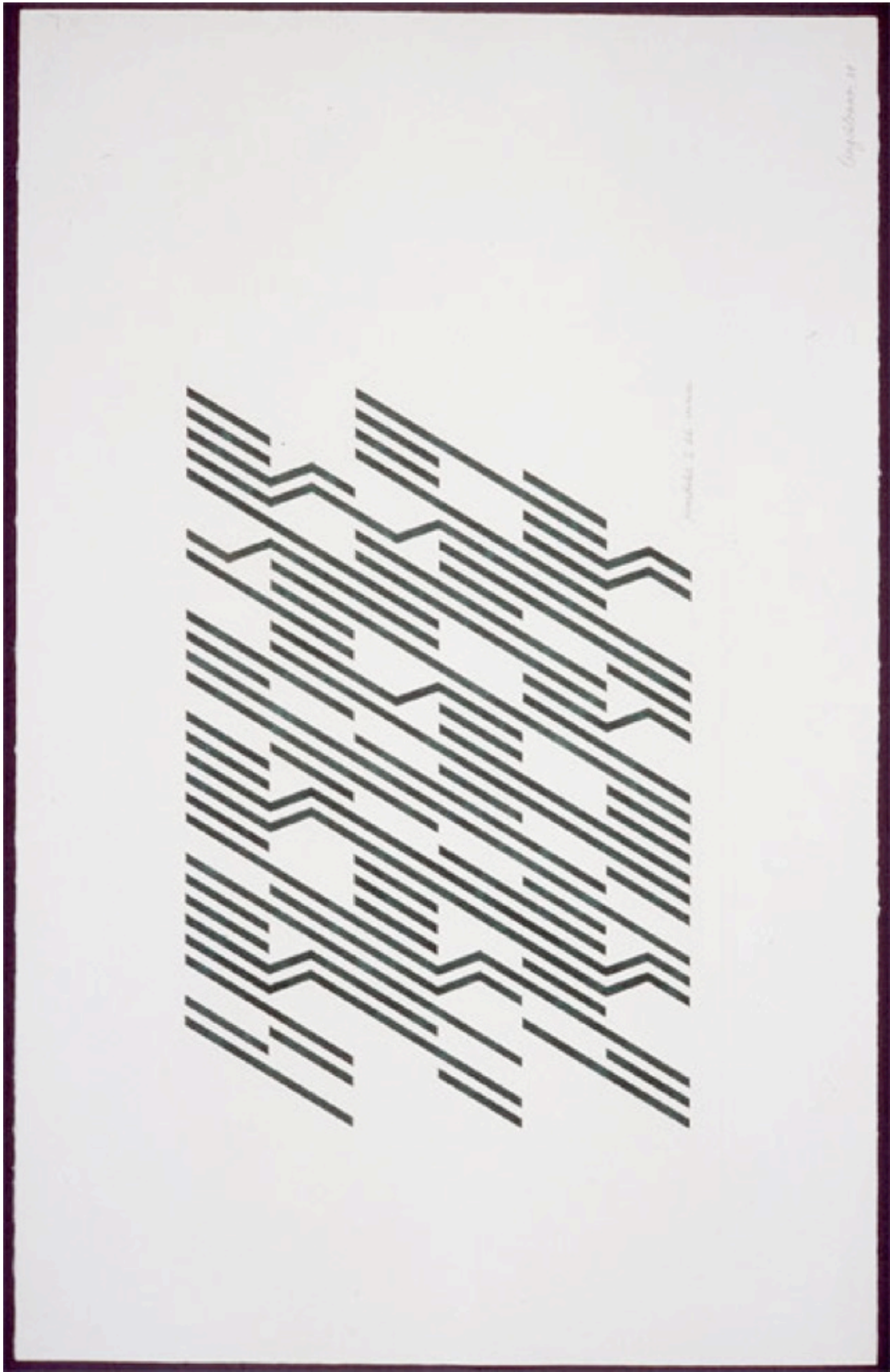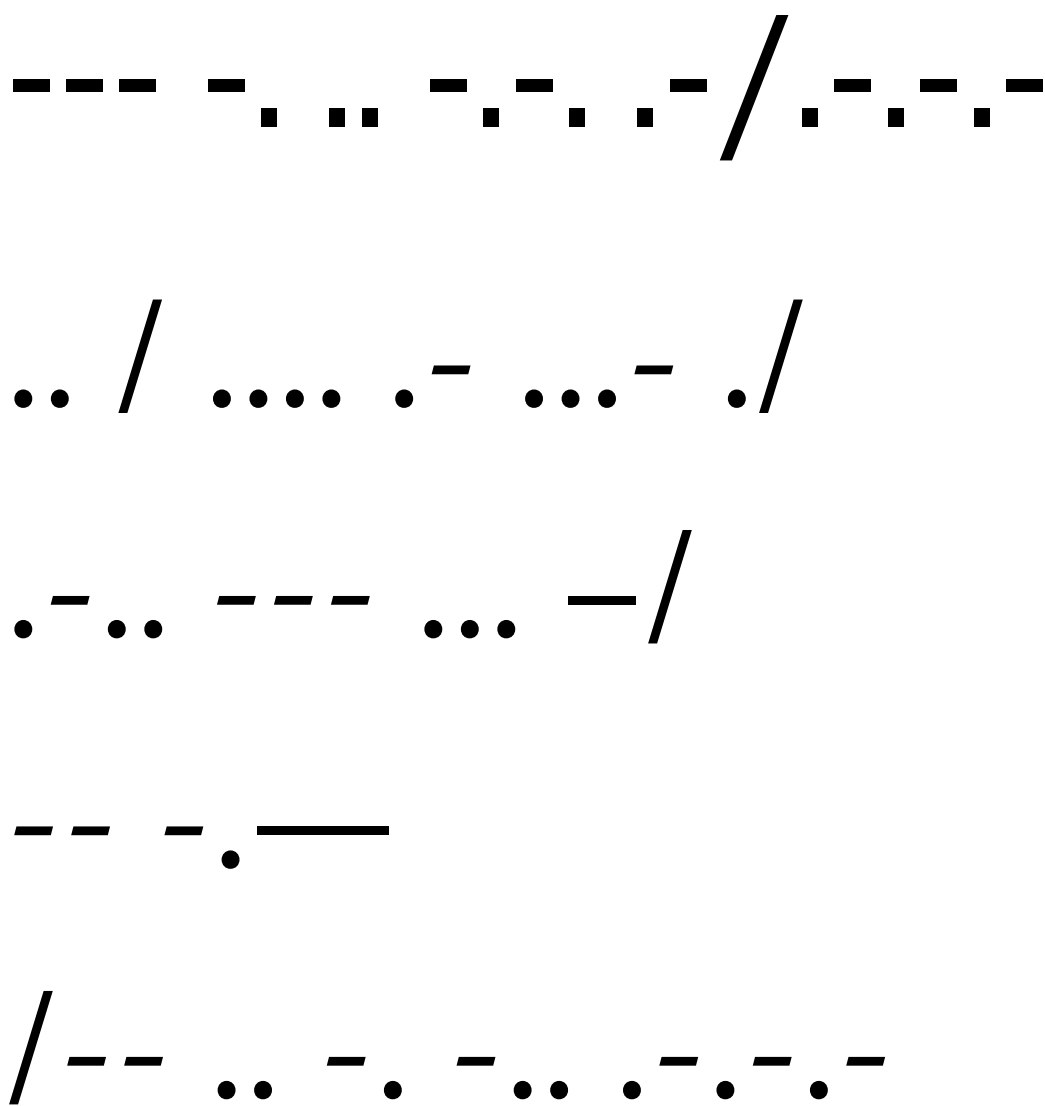
Fig.1.12

252 penetrates_____150 village____
_____223 you_____ 152 discrepancies_
_____248 obstacle
__193 castle_____200 beauro_____
_____
_____ 209 terminated_____
_____
_____ 215 your_____192 tact_____
___252 monstrous_____
_____ 121 disturbances__
_____ 196 incident_____
_____ 151 betraying_____
___ 115 protocol_____
_____
_____even through the pages of K
you will find S who is always_____
__S Y N C H R O N I S E D__ with uncanny
abilities at___ S Y N T H E S I A_____160

Fig.1.13

Fig.1.14

Fig.1.15

Fig.1.16

Fig.1.17

Fig.1.18

Fig.1.19

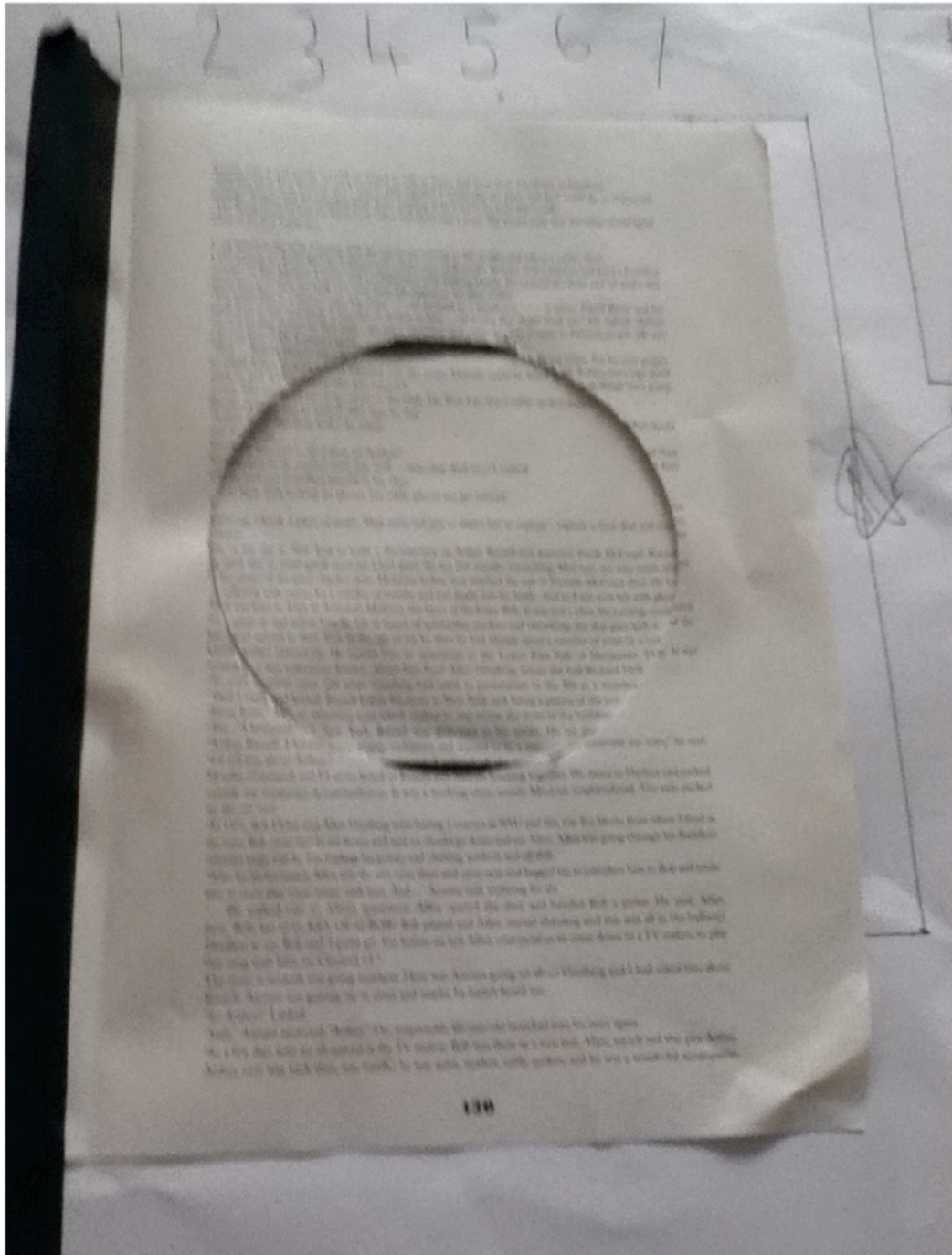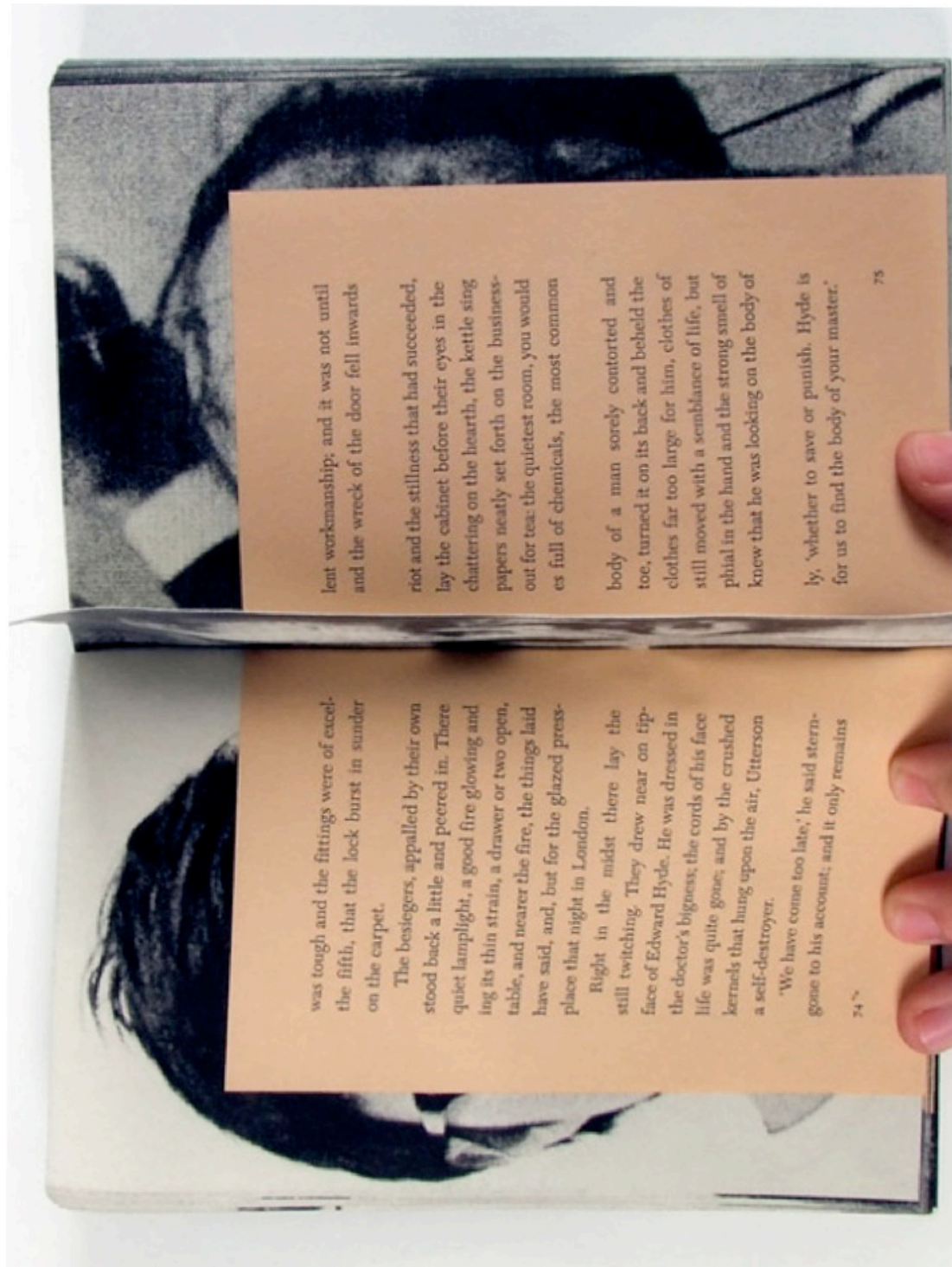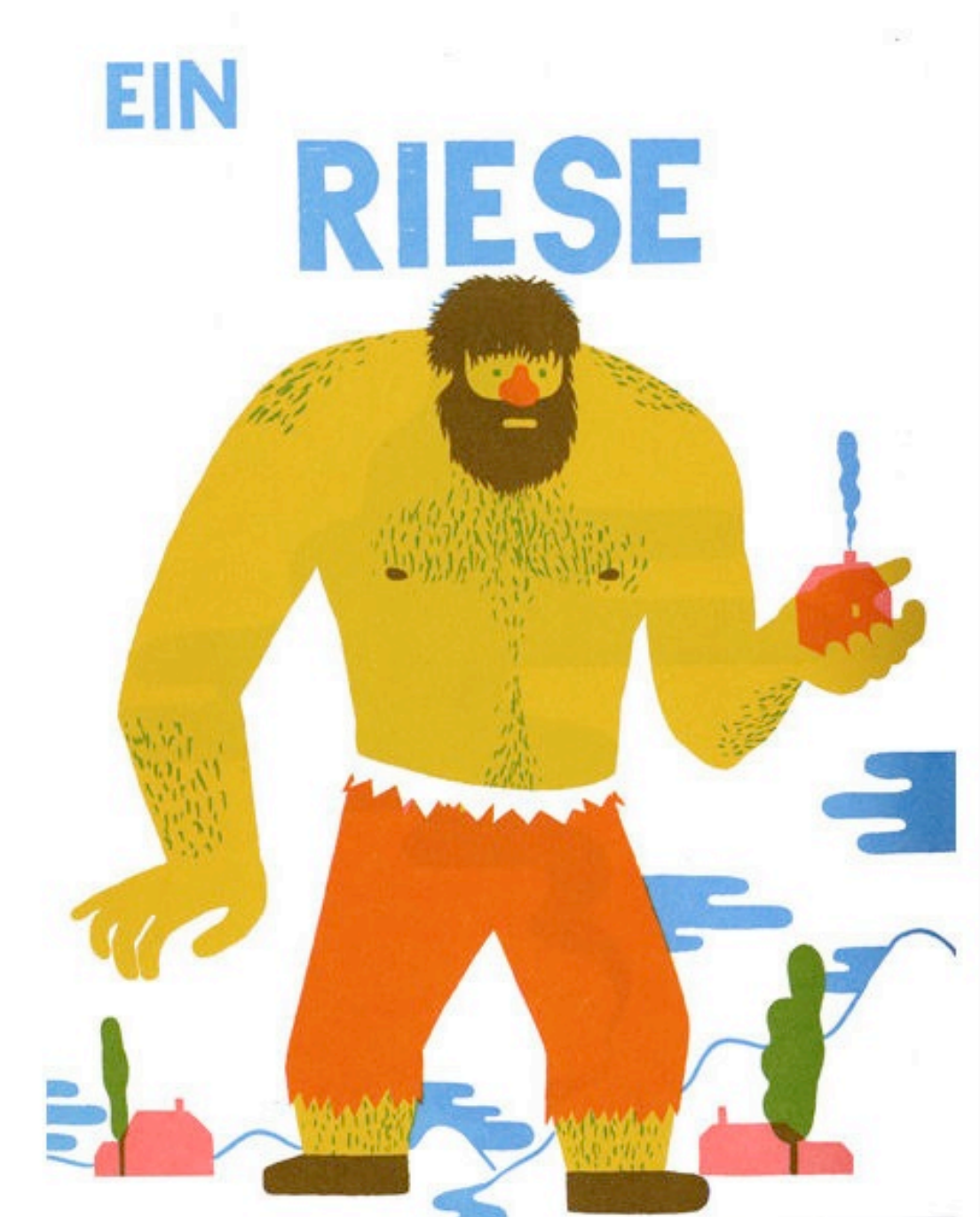## Stage two: concept development

Stamping had unwittingly led me into the web of the Alphabetic Family, and I decided to create an adults alphabet primer book. It would be large like a children's book hand crafted into a piece of art. I would create unique alphabet letters and would design the layout to suit the printing and production processes just like a design book. Every element would be considered and thought through, every decision analysed and every word, illustration and colour thoroughly investigated.

In my alphabet abecedairum, N was definitely not going to settle for just nice, K was certainly not going to get lost in kind G was absolutely not going to be for a trite giraffe. No, in my book N would lounge in narcissism, K would breath in the smell of it's own krotch (cotch) and G would love the smell, taste, sound and sight of genitalia.

The thinking process at this stage was in a very 2-D way, I was thinking only of one character trait for each letter: A for aboulomania, B for busty, C for confusion, D for Dadaist and E for existentialism. It was difficult to decide on one character trait and theme for each letter. I went around in repetitious circles, getting no-where and losing focus on what I needed to achieve.

Unable to focus, I hit the jackpot when I discovered the Alphabetic Labyrinth by Johanna Druker. Her book took me on an explorative adventure that uncovered the hidden magic of the alphabet I had been playing with for nearly three months. Duckers work lead me to Palaysi's alphabet interpretation, Firmage's Abececrium, and Tory's alphabetic re-imaginings. I began investigating Focaults "Archeology of Knowledge", the works of Sigmund Frued, the ideas of the palimpsest from Umberto Eco and Mayakovsky's, "For the Voice".

I discovered how much the alphabet crops up in creative poetic imaginings; Zukofskys "A" and Rimbauds "Vowels". I was glad to know I wasn't the only crazed obsessive with letter personalities. "*Perhaps our phonetic alphabet has been the subject of so much abstract speculation and poetic association because it replaces an ideography that was laden with magical referents as well as early writing systems that were themselves considered magical" (Firmage, 2000, p. 138).* Uncovering the mystical works of other Alphabet fans helped to extend my mind, making me view the alphabet in a 3D way, not just as letters with one characteristic but as actual people and spirits who have morphed throughout history, weaving throughout time, growing and declining in different periods and sprouting up in religion, politics and cultural traditions from the beginning of time. French poet Mallarme called the alphabet*, "our ancient heritage from the ancient books of magic" (*as cited in Firmage, 2000, p. 135).

My self-indulged insanity was useful in experimenting with the sound and movement within language. Language and the way language is grouped continually provide a platform for thought and questioning. Standing on the platform and diving into language questions; what is fragmentation, is it about being split, are personalities fragmented, is the world fragmented, are humans fragmented, how can words be fragmented, what does visual fragmentation look like, what does fragmentation resemble?. If something is H A L V E D then it is essentially fragmented. How does the word halved feel about literally being H A L   V E D ? The halving of the word now makes the eye see the two words H A L is that a hall or a hal a form of Hell and what does V E D mean, is it a meaning or a code for the individual meaning of each letter in V E D What does the V and the E and D mean and what do they signify when they are grouped. What is the message and how can I manipulate the human eye to see what I want it to see? If I place a page of yellow beside my story will it change people perceptions and feelings of that story? Is there a universal soul or idea of what yellow means and how it makes you feel?

What changed when I place MOTHER FUCKER beside a soft yellow page?

What changes when I group letters, HA H A H A H A   A X   AX   KOA ?

And how words can be broken up to create new meanings?

Femi   nine

Mascu   line

Euth in asia   is that youth in Asia or euthanasia should be in Asia ?

The breaking and playing with language lead to experimentation with shapes and colours. If you swing the point of the M around they can point into each other ><. Which must mean M is inward looking, like a monologist is, like the self-indulged are (Fig.2 & 2.1). What happens if I make K the krotch bright red, will people think it is angry, lustful, what changes if I make it blue? I experimented with everything, printing letters in different colours, even printing the prose in colour. These experiments were important in working colour alongside the narrative in the final copy.

Alongside the main story of each letter I began writing on the left hand side of the page, marking, reflecting, critiquing. These notes were the letters personal voice, responding to the story I had written (Fig.2.2 & 2.3). I began to imagine I had captured the letters from all around the world, finding the S in the center of a whore house in Amsterdam, finding the B in a classroom at Harvard, sourcing the A through a series of drug centers. It was like I had locked them in a room and was interviewing them. When I had finished the written interview I let them make their own personal notes on the left. I discarded this layout as no one really seemed to understand what the notes were for or whose voice they were. They did not look good aesthetically either. I liked the idea, but if no one was going to understand it, it seemed silly to do.
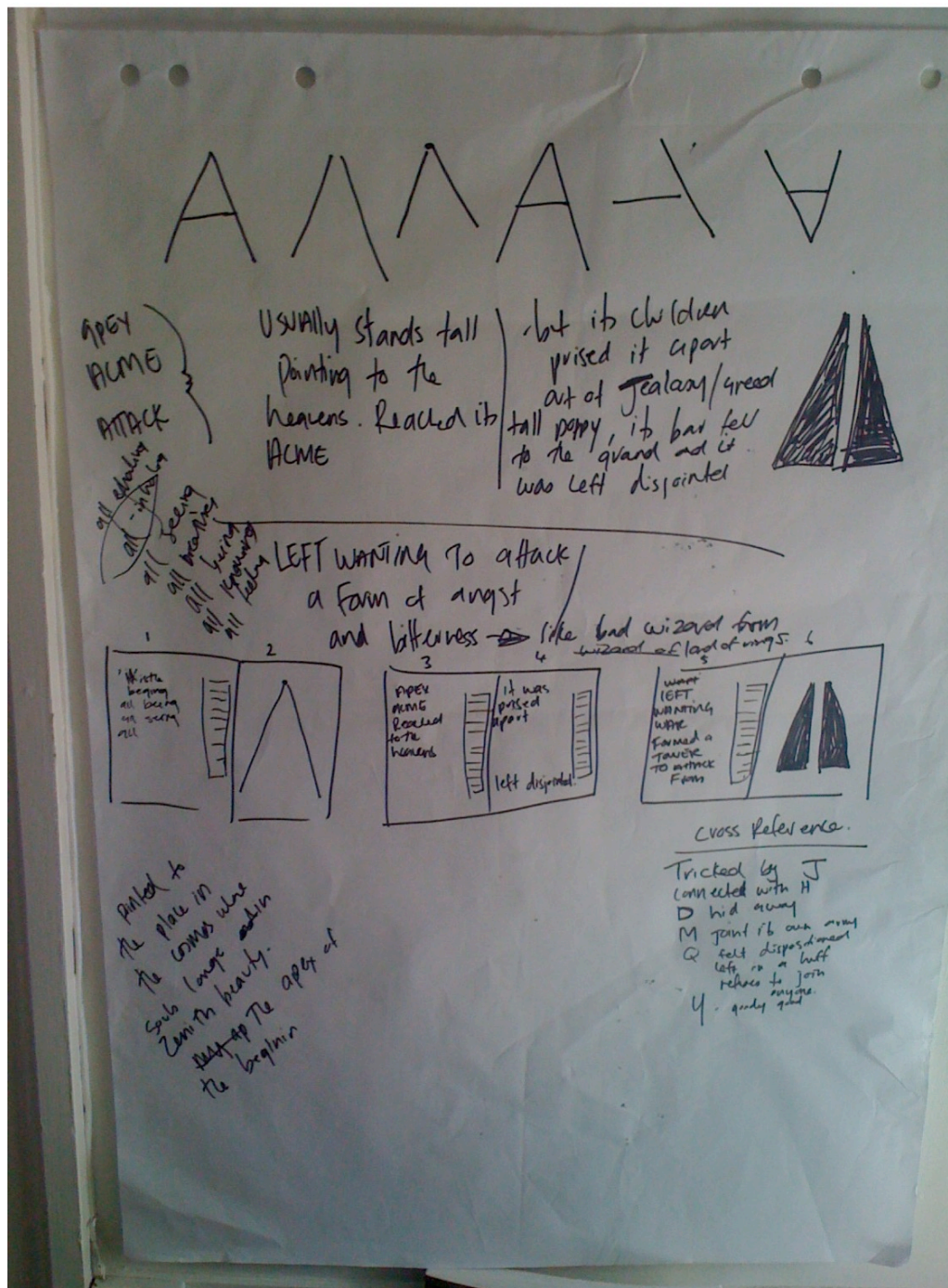
Fig. 2

Fig.2.1
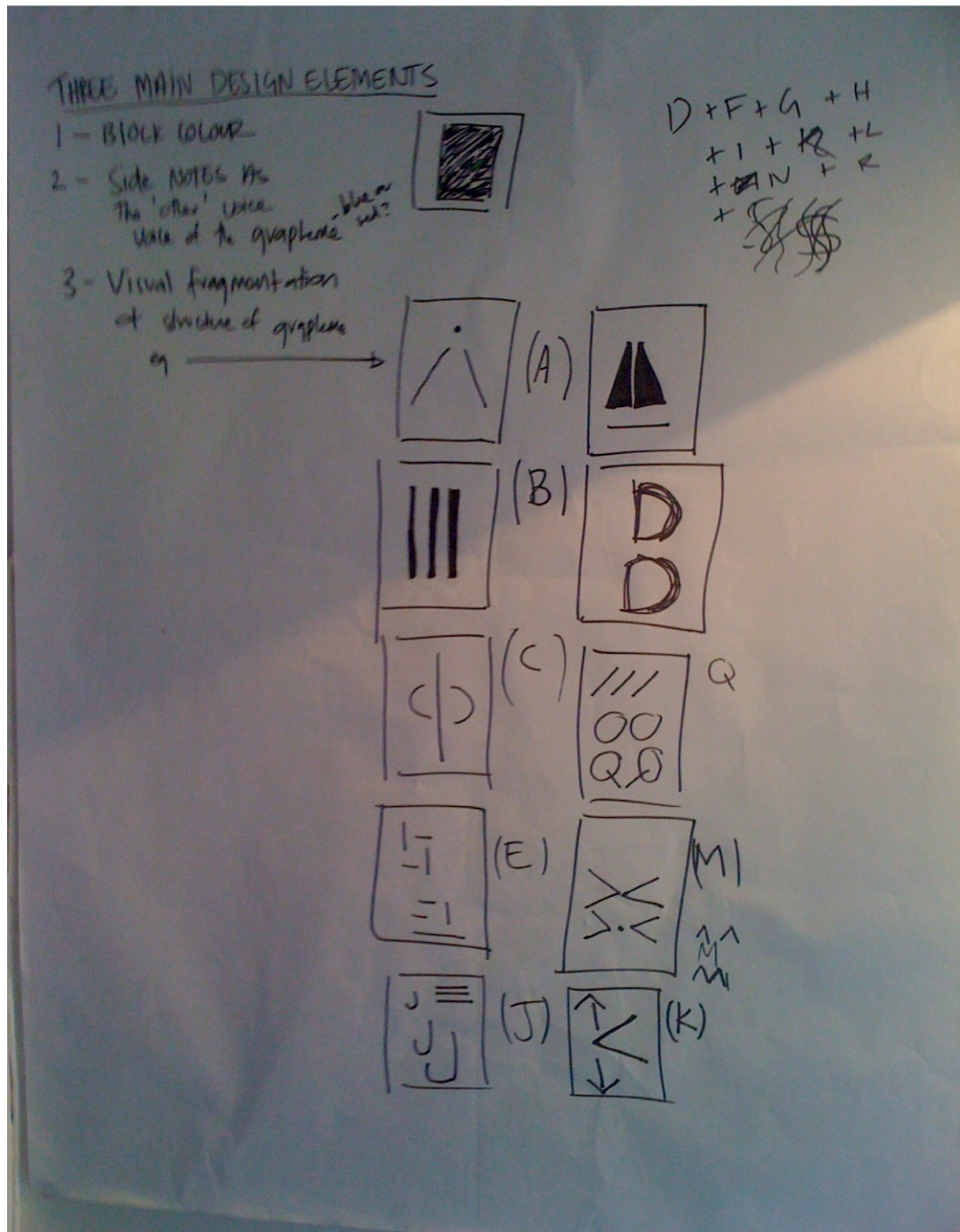
Fig.2.2

Where would loyalties group?

HA
HA
HA
AH

Or

AX
AX
XA

Or

A OK
KO A

Were some conspiring?

J was.

I say varnished, I say velvet, I say satin, I say double, I say queen, I say long, I say black, I say soy, I say flat, I say white, I say Ginsberg, I say nay, I say gay, I say straight, I say whiskey, I say wine, I say hmmm, I say ha, I say um, I say dream, I say wish, I say wait, I say stay, I say meet, I say there, I say here, I say loud, I say shush, I say on, I say off, I say long, I say short, I say Cage, I say middle, I say fiddle, I say violin, I say string, I say metal, I say solo, I say group, I say longitude, I say latitude, I say love, I say enough, I say Aldous, I say hate, I say mate, I say tits, I say dicks, I say vegetarian, I say egalitarian, I say dictator, I say democracy, I pseudo, I say faith, I say lost, I say hope ,I say nope, I say yes, I say regress, I say yes, I say no.

I say the hardest thing to see is that which is right in front of you. Least suspecting. Always innocent. !

Fig.2.3

joints born

                        Linked together

Eaten alive

Soul has gone
Tubes run from the nose.

Blood seeps down

Veins have tightened
 No fluid

Empty body falls to the ground

Burnt in the sun Frozen by the winter

Unidentifiable they linger in the   ground

 Suspect and waiting
      Always they will sit

Beyond all eternity the blue tonged lizard

Creeping before them
 Mysterious mountains twisted and

knarled the fingers crack open

Nails varnished in
Swords thick skull
blazing

Can you see, compulsion seized Moi.

DES/ TIN/ ED

He drew circles you see. Continuous, never ending circles circles circles always round and round to round and round.
Perfectly formed, achingly beautiful circles.

He drew. You see?

Stage three: storyline and design

I started creating the storyline by first analysing what each letter visually looks like; J looks like a hook, G is curvy, A is pointy, B looks like breasts and T looks like a hammer or a handle. From this point I then asked what was A pointing too, what had J hooked, what was G interested in, who had made use of T. I integrated the thoughts of Rimbaud's colour associations where A is black, E is white, I is red, U is green and O is blue and collated the musings of Palaysi, Tory and Firmage. The story began to create itself, and I soon has a subtle storyline: The alpha male A exhibits the classic pride and the fall. The rest of the alphabetic family tear down the thrown of A, abandoning their leader. They turn and move towards Z who ascends to the thrown, becoming the crazed leader of the family.

Within this thin storyline I wove in sexual connotations and representations. Firmage (2000) talks about the first five letters of the alphabet as being a minicosmic cycle where A is the penis inserting sperm into B the ovaries and C is the womb with D being the growing fetus and E the image of birth and F the image of the child and the final step. I read somewhere that the vowels had at some stage in history been associated with the sex parts of the human body. Unfortunately I could not find where I had read this so cannot reference who and where it was said. I took my own creative liberty is giving each vowel (except I i) a beautiful genital crown and made A the penis, E the nipples, I had nothing due to the fact it is far too holy, O the asshole and U the vagina. Without a doubt, in many academic and historical alphabet books the vowels have always been seen as divine, which I referenced throughout Alphabetica Archaeologica. I also read hat some though the vowels were the shout of the devil- A! E! I! O! U! I liked the idea of this and made all the vowels a little dark. Once again, I am unsure where I read this so cannot reference it.

I gave every letter a feel. I thought of the taste, smell, sound, rhythm, feeling, thoughts, loves, hates, obsessions, attitudes, personalities, colour associations and habits of each letter. The idea is that every letter has a subtle vibe, a feeling that you get when you look at the letter illustration and read the story. B has a busy, full and intense vibe. B talks about theories of life and the beginnings of the world. It is vital the reader take the time to look at the words used and to establish a rhythm. "It is certainly wrong quite wrong to read a poem in a hurry, as if it were a telegram" (Munari, 2008, p.68). If a reader gets nothing else than a feel for each letter then I am happy.

Alphabetica Archaeologica was becoming a creative take on Michele Foucault's Archaeology of knowledge. A complete contemplation on life, language and the alphabet: This project was self-creating, like a palimpsest, it formed a story with the essence of the stories before it still lingering. Alphabetica was becoming an open story, internally dynamic and psychologically engaged (Umberto Eco, 1989). Essentially a mediation on semiotics, Alpha differs in that it removes the alphabet from merely being just symbols and instead looks at the letters as forms of spirits with rhythms and personalities. De Lamartine agrees, with the removal of letters as mere symbols and said, "Letters are symbols which turn matter in spirit" (as cited in Firmage, 2000, p.135).

Using a mixture of enjambment, lyrical sentences, polysemy, mixed diction, mimesis, and parataxis to enhance the feel of each letter were essential in adding individual characteristics to the letters". I spelt words how they sound, I wrote words so they look how they sound, I used no capitals unless it was a direct reference to a letter and I used no grammar conventions. Coining my own words such as "vomitable" and "phallusical" was to show how language is not bourgeois. Language is free and open; any one any-where has the right to do with language what they will. There is still so much space for words to be created. I mean, why not have the word phallusical, surely there should be a word for a musical penis?? Giving letter M mixed diction to show its dual personalities, assigning mimesis to N, marrying polysemy with Y and

spreading Parataxis throughout the book; " what shell shall the male soul inhabit inhibit indisguise inside"(from letter F, pg 56).

I also used inter-textuality for jealous, suicidal Q. I referenced the last paragraph of five authors who never finished their works, either because they committed suicide or were plagued by self-doubt and insecurities. All the small copy in Q is the works of Kafka, Coleridge, Gustave, Dickens and Don Juan. Representing the forces that are of Q; self-doubt and self-loathing, I wrote Alphabetica with little understanding of language techniques, and have only recently realised it does in fact have similarities with the writing techniques mentioned above.

TRADITIONAL LETTERPRESS

In June I had moved to Lyttelton in the South Island where I began interning at Ferrymead Printing Society in the hope of printing Alphabetica using traditional printing methods. The traditional printing process amazed me daily I got to touch the alphabet, ink the alphabet, set the alphabet and print the alphabet. The letters became more alive and started to take on very specific and sometimes quite twisted and mischievous personalities.

Here I began to set type using traditional letterpress printing techniques. Working with the three old men who run the print warehouse, I learnt about paper grain, impression, type furniture, spacing, ink, linotype and of course layout (Fig.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 & 3.6). This process is incredibly time consuming and it takes at least two to three days to place and set just one page. Not only is it time consuming setting the pages and starting the machines but it is also time consuming finding the right paper for the machines as most paper merchants in New Zealand have stopped importing letterpress papers. I spent four months hand making pages from Alphabetica and was extremely disappointed when I accepted I would not be able to finish the book in the time allocated for the Master program.

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN

Having a clear vision of the design for Alphabetica, but being unable to produce it own my own, I collaborated with graphic designer Simon Oosterdijk. Together we worked on the alphabet lettering and the type treatments through out the book.

LETTER DESIGN

We began by designing illustrative vintage type, but quickly realized the letters were flat and 2-D (Fig.3.7). Going back to the purpose of Alphabetica, which is to show the movement of an alive alphabet, Simone and myself, began playing around with moving images. How can you show movement on something where movement is impossible (Fig.3.8)? Searching the Internet for moving images with white backgrounds that related to each letter character we found moving line drawings, Spiro graph, heartbeats, fireworks, cartoon characters, French animations and Moriceau's moving images which we began slicing and dicing and then using as a type brush (Fig 3.9, 3.10, 3.11 & 3.12). Opening up the sequences where necessary to provide more clarity and closing up the movement when we needed a letter to be more mysterious. It was a massive undertaking that took five months to complete. Just copying the moving image onto your hard drive and then slowing the images right down and cutting it them up could take hours. Creating a colour scheme, style, vibe and atmos for twenty-six rebellious letters was, at times, overwhelming.

TYPE TREATMENTS

We came up with three style treatments that were reflective of the printing format we chose. Choosing to self-print on the Risograph machine meant we needed to design a specific layout where we could incorporate the show through of the ink. Because I had been donated a thin 80gsm paper by a printing company we felt the thin paper should be maximized. Rather than adjusting the printing, we worked with the printing and made each side of a leaf have copy sit either above or below each other. This way the show through was celebrated, and meant we could get creative with type treatments.

The type treatments were created to work with the printing process as well as giving visual movement to the narrative. Having one style treatment seems a little bland for such a busy family constantly on the move, so instead we created three. Letters A B E F G H J L N O P R S U W Y were placed in the middle of the page, either at the tope or bottom, reflecting the traditional style of a children's alphabet book. Letters C I M Q were put in thin columns with less space, reflecting the busy inner workings of these particular individuals. Whilst letters D K T V Z were in the middle but had a wider side barrier, reflecting the fact these letters spread out and were extremely encompassing, the alphabetical spiritual rebels and healers.

ITC Cheltenham was chosen as the main font as it is reminiscent of a children's book and reminds me of sitting on the matt in primary school reader large lettered books.

Editor of Turning Pages Andrew Losowsky says *"A tight concept is essential for a successful publication. It should spread its influence over every part of the creation process, from the style of commissioning to the choice of materials. If successful, the individual emotional charge of every element, from the text and images to the choice of paper to typography, will combine to create a holistic, coherent package- all of which enhances the focus of the overarching concept itself, pushing forward each narrative with its own sense of momentum"* (Losowsky, 2010, p. 11).

STUCTURE

The structure of the copy took on a life of it's own. Alphabetica replaces grammar and punctuation with light grey lines that are used as breathing spaces and pauses forcing your eyes to halt and giving you room and time to breath. Expelling formal grammar conventions was not a deliberate choice, just a elimination. Having always had a problem with anything that requires logical patterns, I naturally tended to write grammar-free, and instinctively used white space in its place. Realising my work had nothing to disambiguate the language; I experimented with space and lines instead. When reading this book, it is important the reader takes time to think about the way words are used and combined, the breathing lines force the reader to slow down.

ILLUSTRATIONS

I began working with Christchurch illustrator Ben Ningtoutao on four genital drawings for letter G. I wanted G to celebrate genitalia; I wanted G to be about the un-shaming of genitalia and the beauty of genitalia. Ben Produced illustrations that were crude, frightful and without the subtlety Alphabetica required (Fig.2.17) I then began work with Melbourne artist Brett Carwardine who drew me excellent humorous genitalia illustrations. He drew people that I know, people who are not ashamed of anything – real people with real personalities not clouded by genitalia but enhanced by it. These fitted perfectly, and when I discovered the vowels has been associated with the different genitalia I moved them to suit each appropriate letter.

SEXUAL TREATMENTS

Sexuality and psychosexual themes are deeply rooted in mythological beliefs, philosophy, spirituality, religion, ethics, theology, classics and the alphabet. If I was to create a book about the alphabet, I felt it would be wrong to not include the sexual connotations the alphabet had been historically given. The vowels as genitalia and the idea of the minicosmic cycle lead to the concept of some of the letters being stuck in one or two of Freud's stages of pyschosexual development. Perhaps G is stuck in the Genitalia stage, and maybe S is stuck in the masturbation stage (Frued,1905)? The sexual themes in Alphabetica demand we question nature versus nurture, it pleads we inspect evolutionary changes and stresses we understand the social norms around sexuality. In no way is the use of sexuality an aid to shock or incite controversy instead it is a reflection of the subtle elements of human society.
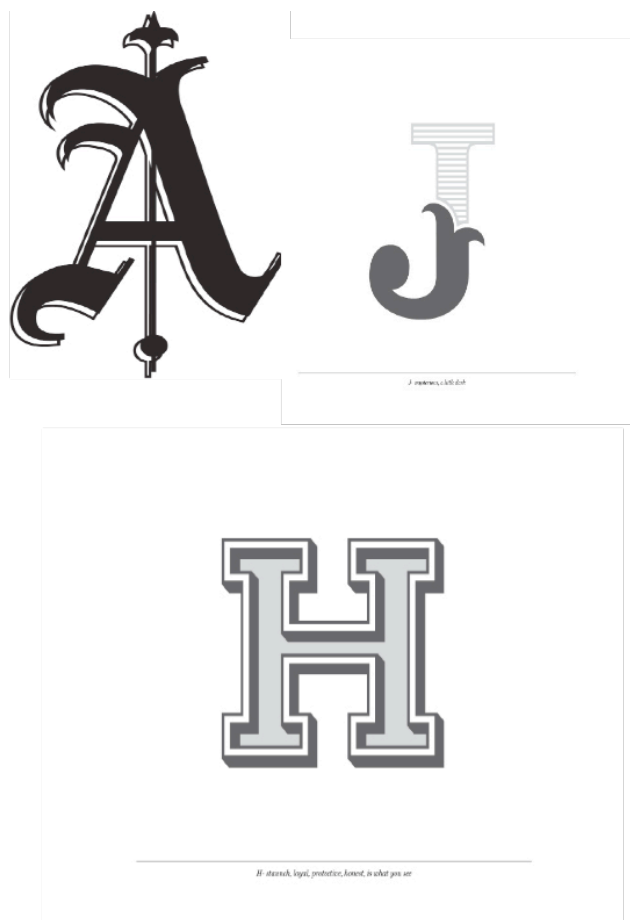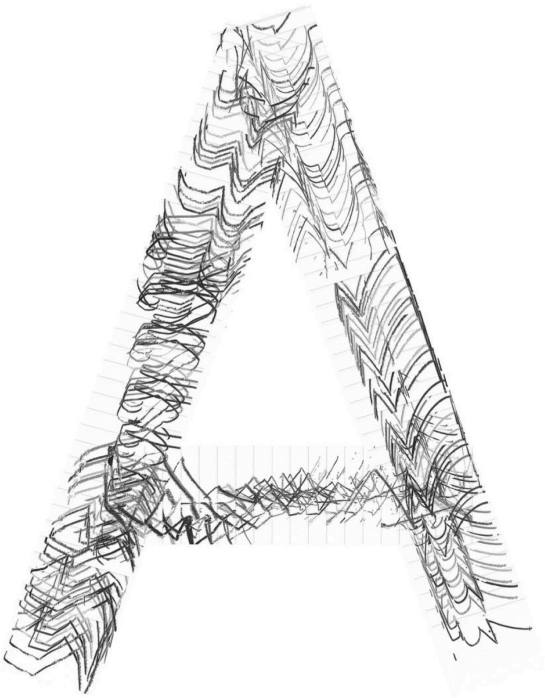
Fig.3

Fig.3.1

Fig.3.2

Fig.3.3

Fig.3.4

Fig.3.5

Fig.3.6
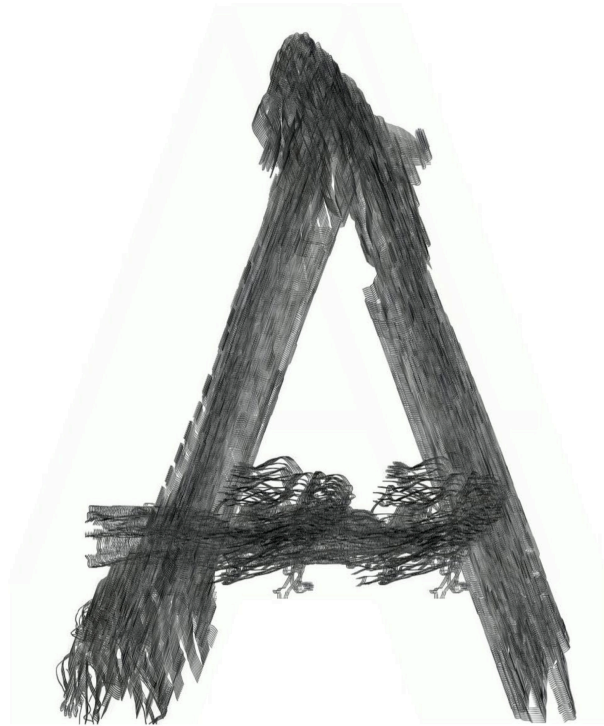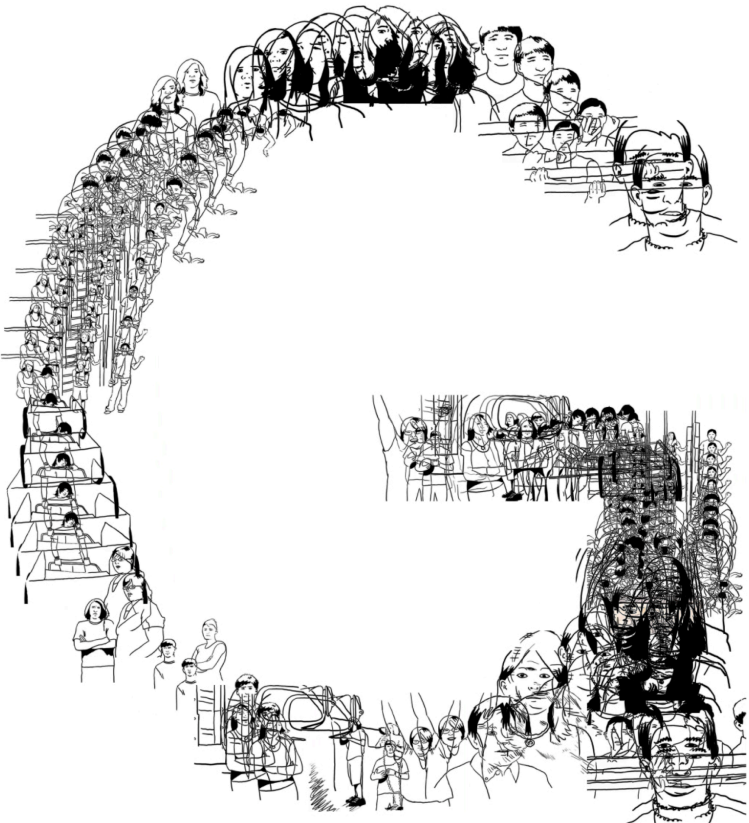
Fig.3.7

Fig.3.8

Fig.3.9

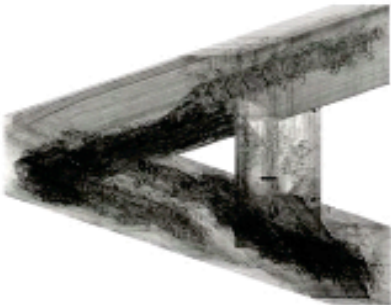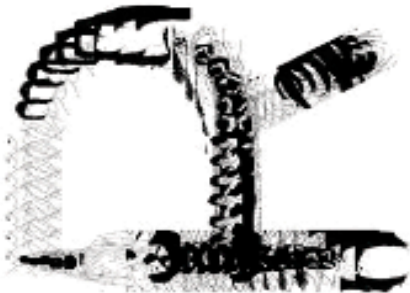Fig.3.10

Fig.3.11

Fig.3.12

Fig.2.17

Stage four: production

PRINTING

The attraction for the Riso was due to the ability to control the means of production. It's like in William Morris' "Art and Its Producers": To own the means of production is the only way to gain back pleasure in work, and this, in return, is considered as a prerequisite for the production of (applied) art and beauty"(sourced from Behind the Zines, 2011, p.11) (Fig.4 & 4.1). Although the Riso does not print high quality images and copy it does print in a distinctive and unique grainy style, adding to the traditional and historic feel of Alphabetica.

Printing on the Riso took three days. To make a master on it takes around 15 minutes and I had nearly 200 to make. Hearing the stories being lazered onto the masters and then rolled onto the ink drums brought the book alive. The paper used for the copy is called Munken and was donated by Rainbow Print in Christchurch. The paper is beautiful and textured, similar to the paper used in old historic books. The letters and the genitalia illustrations were printed on coated matt stock, so the colour intensity would be tripled and so they could act as a type of divider between the letters. The heavier paper stock has a tactile element; it is very nice to touch and is smooth on the fingertips.

COVER DESIGN

The cover design is unusual in that the end of the name is on the front cover, while the beginning on the name is on the back. This was done so you can display the book on a shelf with the spine facing out so the name reads from left to right. For those who display books will appreciate the tactile and tangible way it becomes a display similar to a piece of art or a poster. Printed on a large format printer the cover colour gives life and attracts the eye of the

reader. As conceptual literature I gave thought to how I would publish and display Alphabetica.

The ability to self-print, and to self-source everything for the publication was extremely satisfying and absolutely invigorating. Self-publishing is a form of freedom, where there are no mainstream commercial demands.

Fig.4

Fig.4.1

RESULTS: *a dig through letters D A S*

LETTER   D

Dear old letter D is the third stage in the minicosmic cycle, the growing fetus. D has motherly instincts and has visions in the night, visions of evil coming for her children. D aims to warn the rest of the family about what she sees. D is the warning light, blinking red. D is also the door, to open or close. Originally associated with Determinism, direction and distance.. Said to be binding and the rest in a place, D is firm and visible; to say "D" is to yell out loud.

Representing the phases of the moon (Firmage,2000) D, goes glide around watching from above, checking at all angles, the sight from the waxing crescent, the view from the waning hump and the vision from the waxing gibbous. D is said to binding and the rest in a place. To say "D" is to yell out loud. From the unfinished journey of C, who is so confused and not whole comes D.

D has visions of the night, visions of her children and its family, causing problems for her perception. Her worry blurs everything together, D can hardly see straight. Her predictions are not futuristic, but an erratic and crazed TURISTIC FUTURE. D has dreams filled with lust and psycho-sexual elements. D sleeps with its scrotum in the air, falling into deep sleeps of synthesis and synchronicity. D links into the dreams of others, filling there minds with sexuality and a fear of the void, she makes them sweet and see the degeneration of what D perceives is the future of the alphabetic family.

D's worry causes it to fall into a repetitive state of Dadaism. Long nights filled with sweat and tears.
"the terrible night the terrible night the sad night"
"the night of growth   the night of development"
"the void of emptiness   the unseen void"

I sliced in sentences from Dimitti Wilhemls book, Te Tohunga; The Ancient Legends and Traditions of the Maoris.I had originally written about the terrible night the terrible night the sad night, and when my supervisor mentioned he had read something similar in Te Tohunga. I felt it ok to take some of the myth and place it into D. This inter-textuality works well in showing how much the worry and visions of D spread through other literature

The main source of design inspiration for D is the way the grapheme looks. D has a bulge out one side and looks as if it could topple over; giving the impression it is unbalanced. D does not perceive good and bad, only bad. Instead of seeing the peace in the night, D can only see the loneliness. D was designed to represent the worries and visions that encompass it, putting together lots of bits and pieces, which we blurred together to reflect D's one perception and one thought process.

LETTER   A

A is named the Alpha, referring to alpha the beginning, alpha the male and alpha the God. "I am Alpha", said God. A represents the male penis, the sperm and the father. A is the eagle of the world of sound. Full of pride, A encounters a fall. A has the values of the Ox, which was traditionally essential for existence, without A we could have no alphabet. A, holds the philosophical associations, abstraction and attention.

The story of A came directly from the visual element of A, the way it points to something, its acme, its peak, its zenith, its arrow. Where is it pointing, is it stuck in the heavens and are its legs stuck on the earth? I was interested to know what would happen if A lost its line holding its legs together.

"a fair amount of pressure put on the line balance fell past the earth" (Alphabetica, p.15).

Page 14 talks about A   A   A, alcoholic A, addicted to whiskey and indecision but also alluding to the different faces of A. A is so prideful that a fall was imminent. On page 15, where the story talks about A being pulled down, the question arises over whether it was "mammaries, front bum or rectum", which refers to the vowels E, U, O, asking which one of the vowels got so jealous of the alpha vowel that they ripped the A from power. On the same page I talk about the fall of A as being unfortunate, but that M hadn't even noticed, this is referring to M's complete self-indulgence, far to busy looking at himself to bother noticing what is happening in and amongst the family.

The question becomes who would stick with A? And where would loyalties come from (Aplhabetica Archaeologica, p. 16, & 17)? It was here that I became interested in examining who were allies and who were enemies within the alphabet family. Where would loyalties lie? Has a double meaning, where would the loyalties lay and where would those supposed loyal followers lie. I matched A up with letters who are slightly untrustworthy, H who moves loyalties in the night, came together to create HA HAHAHA like the loyalty was laughable, X who is completely random and erratic and would move any which way it pleases, combined to create AX, meaning X would AX you if it felt like it, and then K and O and A joint up, O is full of shit and really only lives in its own world and K feels so holy it would lay with A and then move to wherever the next holy spot looked to be, they combined to create KOA as in, A would get KO'd by K and O.

The process of creating the concept and layout for letter A morphed over two major (Fig.5) and (Fig.5.1, 5.2, 5.3 & 5.4) which run together as a slice of A.

Finding a good design for A was tricky, and we came up with heaps of versions, which worked perfectly when we chose to give A four different illustrated A's. Having more than one A is representative of the fact A has many different facets and is overwhelmingly indecisive. The last A is representative of how A eventually turns into itself; the job of running the family becomes too much and A is forced to descend into the darkness becoming black, just as Rimbaud prophesied.

LETTER S

A look into the letter design process of letter S (Fig.5.6, 5.7, 5.8 & 5.9). All of the letters had the same process where we found moving images that related to the letter, copied them to hard drive, cut them up, used them as a brush stroke then opened and closed them when necessary.

Fig.5

I say yes, I say no, I say yes, I say maybe, I say Franz, I say crazy, I say cat, I say sweet, I say castle, I say trick, I say false, I say heat, I say please, I say Currie, I say hurt, I say no, I say radium, I say fool, I say molecule, I say ridicule, I say yes, I say fair, I say Italo, I say beauty, I say trees, I say Baron, I say why, I say cosmos, I say cheese, I say moon, I say croon, I say love, I say no, I say who, I say flew, I say lens, I say capture, I say Thomas, I say sad, I say hate, I say no, I say when, I say mouse, I say women, I say die, I say wife, I say why, I say rouge, I say throat, I say neck, I say chalk, I say Jack, I say Jill, I say grateful, I say desperate, I say pleading, I say nothing, I say spill, I say done, I say view, I say hill, I say down, I say out, I say lost, I say not

Fig.5.1

All is beginning
All is inhaling
All is seeing
All is being
All is knowing
All is sensing
All is feeling
All is exhaling

say crazy, I say cat, I say sweet, I say castle, I say trick, I say false, I say heat, I say please, I say Currie, I say hurt, I say no, I say radium, I say fool, I say molecule, I say ridicule, I say yes, I say fair, I say Italo, I say beauty, I say trees, I say Baron, I say why, I say cosmos, I say cheese, I say moon, I say croon, I say love,

Reasonably God like you think?

A thought so**.**

I say no, I say who, I say flew, I say lens, I say capture, I say Thomas, I say sad, I say hate, I say no, I say when, I say mouse, I say women, I say die, I say wife, I say why, I say rouge, I say throat, I say neck, I say chalk, I say Jack, I say Jill, I say grateful, I say desperate, I say pleading, I say nothing, I say spill, I say done, I say view, I say hill, I say down, I say out, I say lost,
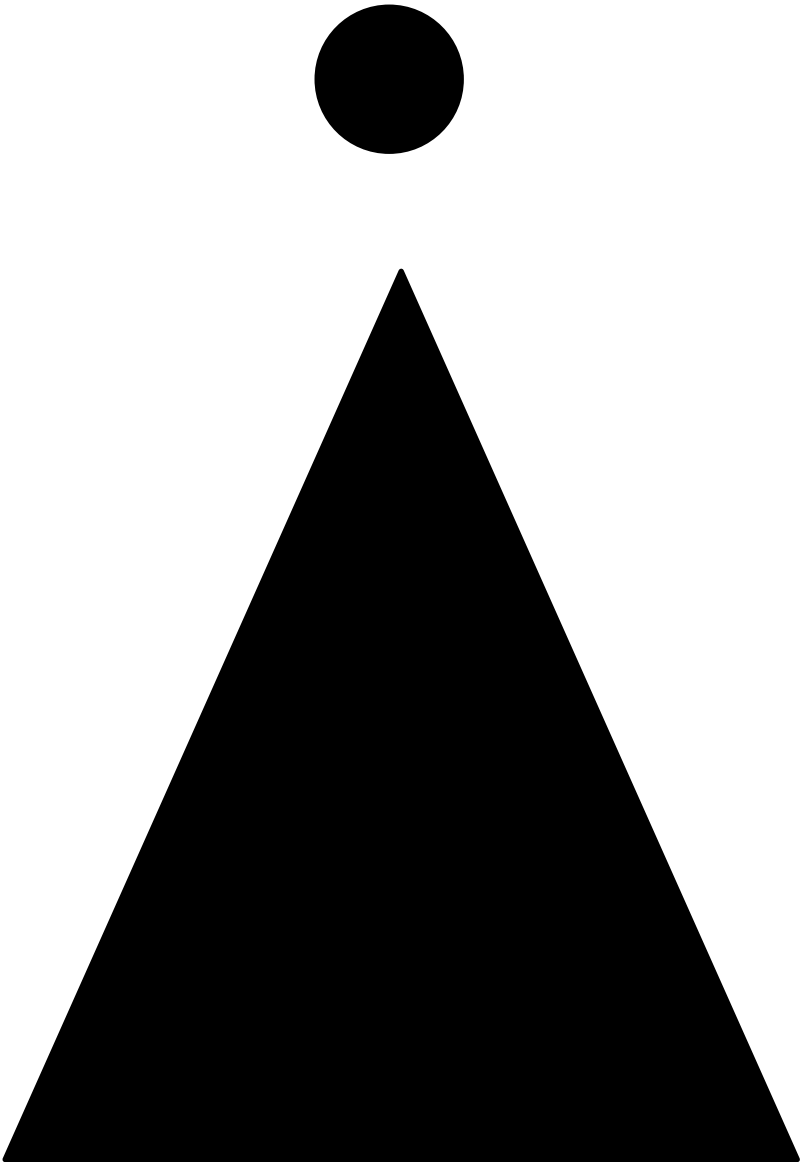
Fig.5.2

75

Fig.5.3

Things change and move and move and move.
Pulled apart by those descended.

Was it Jealousy
Was it Lethargy
Was it Narcissism
Was it Greed

A fair amount of pressure put on the line,
balance fell past the earth.

Although point did stick never loosing foot,
a tower now stood as black as the hole.

Was it hate
Was it bitterness
Was it sorrow
Was it fury

Fairly unfortunate one could say?

   M hadn't noticed.

I say yes, I say no, I say yes, I say yes, I say kneel, I say heel, I say come, I say Miller, I say tripped, I say flipped, I say planet, I say alignment, I say never, I say Capricorn, I say unicorn, I say doubt, I say felt, I say skinny, I say rare, I say listen, I say talk, I say here, I say there, I say where, I say do, I say move, I say stay, I say long, I say short, I say me, I say you, I say why, I say who, I say Foer, I say stencil, I say lined, I say mind, I say red, I say special, I say inferior, I say grandiose, I say lacking, I say done, I say under, I say ground, I say Newton, I say erotic, I say Pussy, I Say cat, I say pleasure, I say weather, I say hot, I say clear, I say dark, I say bright, I fright, I say fall, I say shit, I say Truman, I say bourgeoisie, I say free, I say caught, I say heaven, I say hell, I say fuck, I say bless, I say confess, I say cold, I say blood
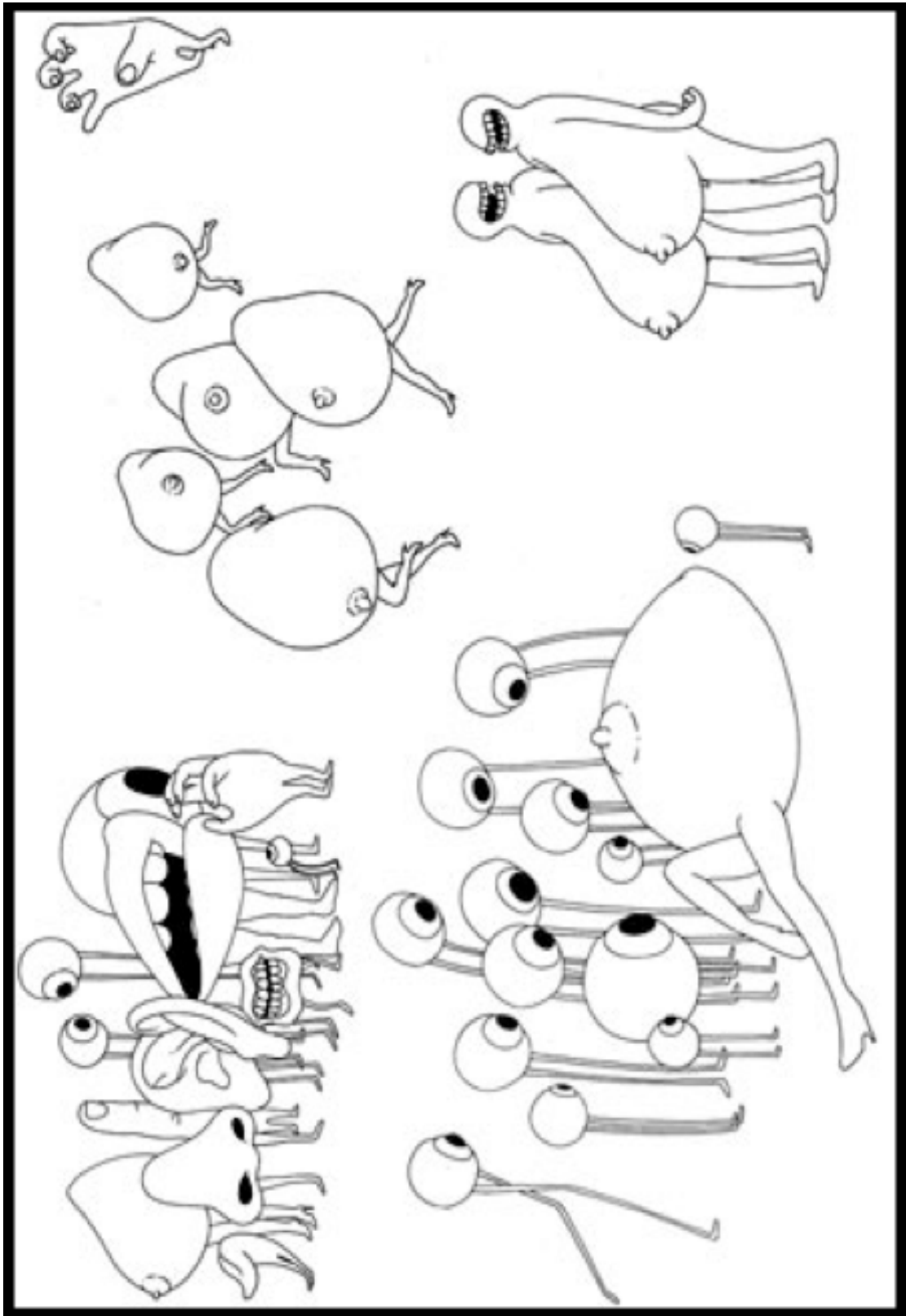
Fig.5.4

Fig.5.6

Fig.5.7

Fig.5.8

Fig.5.9

Fig.5.10

A WAY FORWARD FOR CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE

In understanding the future of Conceptual Literature as a functioning literary genre, I must first develop the notion of Conceptual Literature. Conceptual literature is a very loose derivative of conceptual art and is essentially a contemporary artistic expression that focuses on the central idea you have created, which then takes shape in an elusive and non-conformist way. As it always is with artistic and literary terms, the definition of a movement is always elusive and slippery, never concrete or specific, so I have be forced to coin my own term and definition for Conceptual Literature as; a work of literature born from non-material ideas and concepts, produced in an abstract way that when delivered in it's final form, mirrors the original concept not only through the narrative but through the paper choice, design, printing process, layout and language structure.

This literary genre is completely enveloped in the awareness of "the concept". Being shrouded in debate, the term concept is difficult to accurately describe. However, I especially respond to Plato's musings on the soul of a concept as "innate ideas that were instantiations of a transcendental world of pure forms that lay behind the veil of the physical world". It must be understood that Conceptual Literature is mystical and avant-garde, very little realism lives here. Conceptual artist Sol Le Witt, explains what makes a Conceptual artist; "Conceptual artists are mystics rather rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach" (Alberro & Stimson, 1999, p. 12).

Conceptual literature aims to bride the gap between art and literature (Foer, 2010) and is born from the resolve to break traditional literature structures and forms. This mutiny is a response to the changing digital world where literature is constantly morphing into a mainstream digital form. Conceptual Literature won't have a bar of this digital frenzy, and instead demands to be handled and interacted with in a way that makes it similar to an artifact, something to be nurtured and loved.

As the world moves into the digital realm, there is no doubt we will see a revival and thirst for alternative literature that handles books as art. Unfortunately language and literature becomes distorted in the digital world and although this world becomes a platform for the mainstream to access, it inevitably waters down abstract works, which are handcrafted and designed. All over the world self-publishers have risen up, grabbed alternative literature by the balls, and said, "fuck the kindle". These publishers are creating cult relics; hand made artifacts that are expensive and rightly expect to be placed on a shelf for constant viewing purposes. Lowowsky explains, "The is truly a time of transition. It is a time of strong design and imaginative thinking, creative technology…a reduction in mediocrity and a greater appreciation of physical objects and what the can be" (2010, p.8). With thousands of artists, writers, designers and typographies converging every year at growing book fairs, zine fairs and self-publishers springing up everywhere, there is no doubt that Conceptual Literature will have an important role to play in the future of literature.

CONCLUSION

Alphabetica Archaeolgica is the product of experimentation and obsessive-compulsive behavior. Without the initial experimentations with stamping and letterpress, color and coding I would not have been able to produce a work with so many reflective and at times reflexive layers.

Wound up within the history of alphabet musings, current design trends, unique illustrations and completely unchartered typographical design, Alphabetica is a work of weaving narratives, interactive textiles, alluring design and conceptual production. Coining the genre Conceptual Literature, I am claiming a place for alternative concept based work that celebrates language as art, and staunchly denies the digital world.

Alphabetica is about self-respect. It is about how the self, can control all aspects of literature to create something which represents the maker, yet appeals to a range of people. This books has been self-created, self-controlled, self-printed, self-designed and self-published. Love and energy has gone into every single detail, and I know this sculpture will be acknowledged with enthusiasm - the beauty of literature as art, to be hung on the wall, viewed with the upmost patience and care, recognized for its unique aspects that seduce, shock and nurture all within itself.

The pleasure derived from personally sourcing paper, printing, design, ink, and creating copy was immensely satisfying. Seeing a project come together in every aspect, leaving no stone unturned, although outrageously time consuming, was without a doubt much more enjoyable that purely writing copy for a book. I give you Alphabetica my book, my art and the vision of my messy little heart.

"The true golden age of print? It's right now" (Lowosky, 2010, p.8).

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